

CHILDHOOD

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warned against that which is taboo (*eci ci kola*)—anger, theft, and doing evil to people. Should a child hear bad words from children with whom he stays when his parents go to the fields, he will imitate them and if elders hear him they will report. When parents go off to the fields they warn their child saying, When you stay here in the village, do not wound your playmate or put out his eye, lest it bring trouble (*ovimbu*, lit. 'fines') on your family. Or again, As to stealing eggs or snatching from the pot cooking on the fire, don't do it. Should your playmate say, Let's go and steal such-and-such a thing, you run away; and don't greet a person you don't know lest you may find trouble (*ovimbu*). Then the child will remain with that fear.

From his infancy a child is bashful about coming in where elders are, but a little later he likes to be among them to hear what they are saying and to become accustomed to the points of their talk. In order to catch them (the points), he is quiet. He notices how they greet people, whether in the morning or during the day, or again how they greet guests coming from afar; for there are great differences between the various greetings. Even a small child may be taught to greet people until he is accustomed to it and remembers that people are to be greeted. But if a child grows up without learning to greet people (i.e. properly), they will say of him, His parents taught him badly, the child is a fool for when he meets people he does not greet them, not even guests. His parents will hear it said that their child has not been taught, that he is an indecent fellow, and that even among those who make shame, he does even that which ties up with shame. Among people he speaks standing up instead of bowing over or kneeling and snapping his fingers (i.e. for permission to speak).

His parents must teach him to direct his glance properly that his eyes remain properly in his head.¹ Likewise his mouth, if while he is speaking he should twist it to one side, then if his parents or his grandmother should see it, they will warn him saying, Your mouth, you must not twist it to the side while you speak, lest people should think, He ridicules (us). The child is taught that while speaking with a person he must neither eat, nor

¹ I.e. he must not look his interlocutor in the eye. It is proper to remain with downcast look or to look away at something else. Europeans not understanding this demeanour take it to indicate inattention. One of our pupils failed in his official school examination for this reason, in January 1938.

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- 276 The snuff is pounded and placed in a small wooden box of cylindrical shape. Usually the box is ornamented with incised, burned patterns. [531] The Ovimbundu of Bihé add ashes of wood to their snuff, so producing a mixture called *ulelemo*. The Ovimbundu of Elende usually use the snuff without adulteration. [249] Two main species of tobacco plants are grown.

Women smoke in all parts of Angola. The Ovimbundu do not chew tobacco, neither have I seen it so used elsewhere in Angola. Boys and girls are not allowed to smoke before the age of thirteen years.

- 576 In the *ombala* of the Vangangella near Ngalangí, I asked a girl [234] for her pipe which I desired for my collection. The interpreter took the pipe when she proffered it, explaining that, according to local custom, I had asked for the girl. If I took the proffered pipe from her hand I accepted her. Another social custom associated with tobacco is the passing of the communal pipe from hand to hand in the men's council house.

- 276 Ngonga, my interpreter, says that he has never seen an Ovimbundu woman smoke hemp, but he has seen a woman of the Vangangella [171] (people to the east of the Ovimbundu) smoking hemp. Hemp (*epangue*) is cultivated only by the Ovimbundu men who smoke it. Pure hemp is smoked in the water-pipe which is not passed from hand to hand. Only tobacco is used in communal smoking. Smoking of hemp or tobacco consists of a few deep inhalations; there is not usually a prolonged placid smoking. When hemp is placed in the bowl of the water-pipe it is covered with large grains of sand or a piece of tin. This intervening substance prevents the hot coals from coming into contact with the hemp. The object is to secure slow ignition.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS

- 231- The principal domestic animals are cow (*onjindi*), ox (*ongombe*, which is also the generic name for cattle), bull (*onui*), sheep (*omeme*), goat (*ohombo*), pig (*ongulu*), dog (*ombua*), chicken (*osanji*) (Plates LV, LVI, LVII).

- 492 The transport animals, donkey, horse, and mule, are not used by the Ovimbundu of Elende and not to any extent by Ovimbundu of other parts; but in the south of Angola the Vakwanyama have sturdy ponies and well-kept mules. The ox when ridden by Portuguese is provided with a leather saddle which is very comfortable if covered with a blanket. The brass stirrups are broad and massive. Through the septum of the bullock's nostrils there is a short brass rod to the ends of which the reins are attached (Plate XXX, Fig. 1).

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Men are exclusively the makers of musical instruments, and males are the musicians. Men are the only persons engaged in warfare and administration, and the *onjongo* or council house is used exclusively by males. Men follow the occupation of medicine-man, in which there is considerable specialization. Female practitioners deal with pregnancy and women's ailments. In addition to the tasks for women mentioned above, the following are staple occupations: collecting firewood, drawing water, caring for infants, making pottery, weaving baskets, dancing, and singing. Young girls share these activities with older women.

The foregoing categories explain division on the grounds of sex. Degrees of specialization are not so easy to formulate, but in general a man follows some one occupation, for example wood-carving. Then within this occupation there is specialization in the making of drums, domestic utensils, or figurines.

Almost any woman could make pottery or baskets, but the difference in skill leads naturally to concentration in the hands of expert potters and basket-weavers respectively. These sell their wares to those who either do not make such articles or are inept at the process.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT, MANNERS, AND SALUTATIONS

The parents of a child, also his maternal uncle, assume responsibility for training in the precepts and standards given here. The maternal uncle, who is the mother's oldest brother, is particularly interested because he has to pay fines should his sister's children commit thefts. The evidence indicates that the home and restricted family have formative influences over the conduct of children.

Children are beaten if they tell lies, answer old people rudely, or steal food. Ngonga says that his "stealing hand" was once placed in the hot leaves of the cooking pot. If a child steals an egg which is cooking, the hot egg is held between the culprit's hands.

One cannot fail to notice the quiet and unobtrusive way in which children sit in the presence of their elders both in the home and in the council house. Children do not speak when their elders are in conversation, unless addressed.

A child, likewise an adult, receives a gift with both hands. The implied idea is that reception with one hand is a depreciation of the gift. If a child holds out one hand, the hand is slapped. When receiving, an Ocimbundu says "*kuku*," literally grandfather or elder. Colloquially the word is used to mean greeting, "I thank you," or "I beg your pardon."

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Lying is strongly disapproved and the liar is called *ohembi*. The Ovimbundu appreciate hospitality (*unu*) which also means generosity. A man who is hospitable is said to be *ongavi*. Greediness, which is disliked, is described by the word *oku sapa* ("to be greedy"). There are standards of honesty in sales and exchanges. A deceiver in trade is *ohembi*.

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With regard to the relation of the sexes in early years it may be said that, in spite of boy and girl friendships, and the communal sleeping of boys and girls at the home of one of the girls, a man expects to marry a virgin, a point which has been dealt with in describing marriage ceremonies.

Naturally there is a difficulty in obtaining precise information respecting the details of these nocturnal gatherings of boys and girls. Ngonga said that girls inform their parents concerning the house where the night is to be spent, and there is a point of etiquette requiring that girls must not go to a house where boys are staying together.

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Standards of conduct already described under courtship are a result of direct teaching by parents. Marriage rules and a classificatory system of relationships, with its prohibitive decrees, are taught in the home, in the men's council house, and at initiation ceremonies where such exist. In addition to these sources of instruction there is no doubt an unconscious absorption of ideas and standards. The power of suggestion is always at work through everyday examples.

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Apart from demands made by tribal custom and direct instruction there are variable personal standards of modesty. Ngonga states [562] that many lascivious stories are told among men, and when the men are drunk, they tell these to women. "Sometimes the women laugh, but the good women do not like to hear these tales."

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A male commoner when meeting the king bows low, extends his arms, claps his palms and says, "*ohosi* ["lion"] *akuku* ["grandfather"]." Only the old people follow the ancient custom of falling on their knees when greeting the king. The Ovimbundu never were in the habit of doing more profound obeisance, but the Vangangella, when greeting one of their kings, rub their chins on the ground and place dust on their chests. Even at the present day a woman or child of the Ovimbundu is expected to kneel when greeting a king, but such an acknowledgment is not now usual in greetings given by a male commoner. The reply of the king to the commoner is "*kalunga*." This word enters into greetings of all kinds. The literal meaning of the word is "the sea," "king," "god," or "death," but the interpretation

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of the word depends upon the syllable accented and the context, as further explained in the chapter on the Umbundu language.

A man or woman of the royal family greets the king with the words *na kuku*; *na* means "lord," and *kuku* is a term used for any old man to whom the speaker intends to show respect. *Kuku* is also applied to a man who stands in the relationship of grandfather. The king is expected to reply to a greeting given by one of the royal family by placing his right hand on his chest and saying twice, "*kalunga*." There may then follow from the king a question relating to welfare in general. Possibly the king will inquire the object of his subject's journey. A *sekulu* ("chief of a village") greets a king in the same manner as does a commoner, and the king replies as he would to a commoner.

Commoners greet a *sekulu* with the words *na kalunga* ("lord, greeting"). One *sekulu* greets another of the same rank with the one word *kalunga*, accompanied by clapping of the palms. Male commoners clap hands on meeting; this action is accompanied by the word *kalunga*, from each of them. Two female commoners use the word *kalunga* as a greeting, but as a rule they do not clap hands. They do, however, clap their palms when greeting a woman of the royal house.

Boys and girls must greet their fathers, maternal uncles, grandfathers, and other old men with either of the terms *na kuku* or *na kalunga*, the latter being more usual. *Na kuku* would be the appropriate term of respect for any elderly man. Children use the same words (*na kuku*) when addressing any elderly woman, including a grandmother. A usual greeting of a child to the mother, likewise to the mother's sister, would be *kalunga mai* ("greetings, mother").

There is no prescribed form of address to the medicine-man. Greetings between a commoner and a medicine-man follow the usage noted for two commoners. Ngonga says, "They will treat him (the medicine-man) like a village chief if he is an old man and good. Perhaps they will say *na kalunga* as if talking to a chief."

In the early morning people pass the greeting *oku lipasula*. This means "we have been like dead, we are awake." The appropriate early morning greeting of a commoner to the king or to a chief is *oku lipasula a kuku*. A usual afternoon greeting is *oku lañisa*. The evening greeting is *oku lisuñinya*.

One who desires to pass across a room usually walks in front of other people, but while passing the attitude must not be erect. The thumb and middle finger should be snapped together, while the words

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- 576 *konyimo oko* are spoken. The literal interpretation of these words is "back there." Ngonga says the words actually mean "excuse my back."

827 Spitting in the vicinity of the house of the king or of the chief is not allowed. "If you did that in the old days, you would have to pay something." Some people spit near the hearth in their own houses. A man who spits in the road is expected to cover the spittle. No person would spit in the presence of the chief or of the king. A hand should be placed in front of the mouth by a person who is coughing or sneezing.

576 [851] Shortly after the birth of a boy or girl all who are on good terms with the parents greet them by saying *kalunga*. The word is repeated four times with clapping of the palms. When words have been imperfectly heard and the listener desires repetition it is customary to say *kuku* in an interrogative tone.

[264] No particular etiquette is observed when eating. Two or three children eat from one platter, helping themselves with their fingers to the mush or sweet potatoes.

Rules forbidding the preparation of food by menstruating women, likewise prohibitions relating to stepping over a person, are mentioned in discussing taboos and omens.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF PLAY, MUSIC, AND DANCING

524 182 533 [113] The educational value of play lies in its imitation of the pursuits of adult life. Though there are specialists in music, dancing, and singing, these exercises are indulged in by everyone. Music, singing, and dancing are more than amusements, they are fundamental as coordinating forces in tribal life at all levels of culture (W. D. Hambly, *Tribal Dancing and Social Development*, London, 1926).

Among the Ovimbundu *Cimbamba Co Lia* is a popular game for girls, who form a circle, join hands, and sing:

PART I

524 [535] *Omola una, ndo sile vekango, Cimbamba co lia* ("That little child was left in the desert, the nighthawk ate it"). At the word *Cimbamba* they begin to dance, facing from side to side in such a manner that they meet and bow. Some sing, *Cimbamba co lia* ("The nighthawk ate him"), and others respond, *Kalikisi* ("tis the goblins"), as many times as they wish. Finally a return is made to the first words which are sung again. All musical transcriptions have been made by Dr. G. Herzog from my phonographic records.